

## **UK Nerve Agent Attack/Expulsions and Consulate Closure**

*We stand in solidarity with our Allies and partners and condemn Russia's use of military-grade chemical weapons.*

### **Talking Points**

- The Russian chemical attack on the United Kingdom was a reprehensible attempt to murder citizens on the sovereign soil of a NATO Ally, and its actions have resulted in significant diplomatic and security consequences.
- The expulsion of Russian intelligence officers and closure of the Russian consulate in Seattle were carried out in conjunction with our NATO allies and partners around the world.
- The current security environment is the result of Russia's actions—it has consistently demonstrated reckless behavior through its disregard for international obligations and commitments, and has chosen to be a strategic competitor with the United States.
- Russia's fortunes are married to Europe, and it has the potential to be a partner with the United States and our European Allies and Partner, but this can only happen with a change in the Russian government's behavior
- *[If asked]* The President's order to close the Russian consulate in Seattle was due to the proximity to one of our submarine bases and the aerospace industry.

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**SD Quotes (March 27 Gaggle):**

“...Russia's chosen to be a strategic competitor, even to the point of reckless activity. And that's the only thing that it can be called to the innocent people in Salisbury who were exposed to, possibly -- to the potential of being murdered by this stuff. And I bring it up because it's -- Russia has the potential to be a partner with Europe. Its fortunes are married to Europe, if it sees its way forward. And I think that, right now, we have to recognize that they've chosen to see a -- seek a different relationship with the NATO nations. So it is what it is. And the expulsion of numerous Russian diplomats around the region, from -- and regions all the way to Australia, Europe, North America -- you can see that the nations that have been, perhaps, slow to leave behind the opportunity for a partnership with Russia are now acting on the actions that Mr. Putin has taken.”

“[Qualify what Russia's done]...Attempted murder of a man and his daughter, how's that for starters...they're doing things that they believe are deniable. They take insignia off soldiers' uniforms and they go into Crimea. They say they have nothing to do with what's going on with the separatists in eastern Ukraine; I'm not sure how they can say that with a straight face. They point out that it can't be proven who had tried to kill the person in Salisbury. They're doing things they believe are deniable. And so they're trying to break the unity of the Western alliance, NATO and -- and that sort of thing. It's been pretty clear that they've been inside other people's elections...”

“I think we have to show where all of these democracies stand together. Notice what is emblematic of each of the countries that's evicting Russian diplomats right now. I notice the one common thread. Some have a queen, some have a president -- they're all democracies. And I think that's the statement about how you get to them [Russians].”

**Background/Additional Information**

*The United States was in touch with our Allies in the United Kingdom ahead of the March 14 announcement. We have full confidence in the UK's investigation and its assessment that Russia was likely responsible for the nerve agent attack that took place in Salisbury last week.*

*The chemicals in question are understood to be hazardous nerve agents. The use of chemicals as weapons runs counter to all international norms for common decency and respect for human life.*

*If the Russian Federation is confirmed to be responsible for the nerve agent attack in the United Kingdom, it would be in violation of the Chemical Weapons*

*Convention (CWC). Any toxic chemical used to cause death or other harm is a violation of the CWC.*

*The specific - and repeated - allegations against Russia regarding the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons and now, the UK nerve agent attack, are especially concerning, particularly when considered with Russia's consistent disregard for its international obligations and commitments.*

**QUAD Statement for reference:**

We, the leaders of France, Germany, the United States and the United Kingdom, abhor the attack that took place against Sergei and Yulia Skripal in Salisbury, UK, on 4 March 2018. A British police officer who was also exposed in the attack remains seriously ill, and the lives of many innocent British citizens have been threatened. We express our sympathies to them all, and our admiration for the UK police and emergency services for their courageous response.

This use of a military-grade nerve agent, of a type developed by Russia, constitutes the first offensive use of a nerve agent in Europe since the Second World War. It is an assault on UK sovereignty and any such use by a State party is a clear violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and a breach of international law. It threatens the security of us all.

The United Kingdom briefed thoroughly its allies that it was highly likely that Russia was responsible for the attack. We share the UK assessment that there is no plausible alternative explanation, and note that Russia's failure to address the legitimate request by the UK government further underlines its responsibility. We call on Russia to address all questions related to the attack in Salisbury. Russia should in particular provide full and complete disclosure of the nerve agent programme to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

Our concerns are also heightened against the background of a pattern of earlier irresponsible Russian behaviour. We call on Russia to live up to its responsibilities as a member of the UN Security Council to uphold international peace and security.

**Prepared by:** (b)(6)